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Law Enforcement Agencies Unite Statewide

To Remind Parents of the Importance of Child Passenger Safety

[Indianapolis, IN.] February 8, 2007 —According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), approximately 7,500 lives have been saved by the proper use of child passenger safety restraints during the past 20 years. Yet, motor vehicle crashes still remain the number one killer of children ages 4 to 14 in America. Too often child safety seats are improperly used or not used at all.

That is why the Governor's Council on Impaired & Dangerous Driving and the Traffic Safety division of the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute (ICJI) announced today that a statewide enforcement crackdown went into effect on Sunday, February 4 and will continue through Saturday, February 17. This enforcement crackdown will commemorate Indiana's child passenger safety law.

The primary goal of this public awareness campaign is to remind all parents and other adults responsible for children traveling in motor vehicles that if children are 4'9" and under, they are required to be in a booster seat.

"In 2005, an average of five children under the age of 15 were killed nationwide in motor vehicle crashes every single day," said Mike Cunegin, executive director of the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute. "For this reason, ICJI, along with our state and local law enforcement partners will continue to work hard throughout the year to educate parents and caregivers about the importance of properly restraining their children."

Another goal of this public awareness campaign is to remind all parents and other adults that all children ages eight to 16 riding in a motor vehicle must be in a child restraint or use a seat belt, including those who ride in pickup trucks and vehicles plated as pickup trucks.

According to NHTSA, belt positioning booster seats reduce the risk of injury in a motor vehicle crash by nearly 60 percent. The Automotive Safety Program at Riley Hospital finds that one in three Indiana children are not properly restrained in their booster seats.

“As children grow, the ways in which they need to be secured in a car, truck, van or SUV change,” said ICJI Traffic Safety division Director, Ryan Klitzsch. “The goal of this campaign is to enforce Indiana’s safety belt laws and make sure motorists are restraining children the correct way.”

Additionally, it is always important for expectant mothers to wear their safety belts in order to protect themselves and their unborn child(ren). Expectant mothers should position passenger vehicle lap belts across their hips and below their bellies. Shoulder belts should lie diagonally across the chest.

For maximum child passenger safety, parents and caregivers simply need to remember and follow the 4 Steps for Kids:

- 1) For the best possible protection keep infants in the back seat, in rear-facing child safety seats, as long as possible up to the height or weight limit of the particular seat. At a minimum, keep infants rear-facing until age one and at least 20 pounds;
- 2) When children outgrow their rear-facing seats they should ride in forward-facing child safety seats, in the back seat of a vehicle, until they reach the upper weight or height limit of the particular seat (usually around age four and 40 pounds);
- 3) Once children outgrow their forward-facing seats, they should ride in booster seats, in the back seat of the vehicle, until the seat belts fit properly. Seat belts fit properly when the lap belt lays across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits across the chest (usually at age 8 or when they are 4’9” tall);
- 4) When children outgrow their booster seats, they can use the adult seat belt in the back seat of the vehicle, providing it fits properly.

For more information about child passenger safety in Indiana, please contact the Automotive Safety Program at Riley Hospital at (800) KID-N-CAR or visit www.preventinjury.org.

The Governor's Council on Impaired & Dangerous Driving serves as the public opinion catalyst and the implementing body for statewide action to reduce death and injury on Indiana roadways. The Council provides grant funding, training, coordination and ongoing support to state and local traffic safety advocates.

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